PERCEPTION

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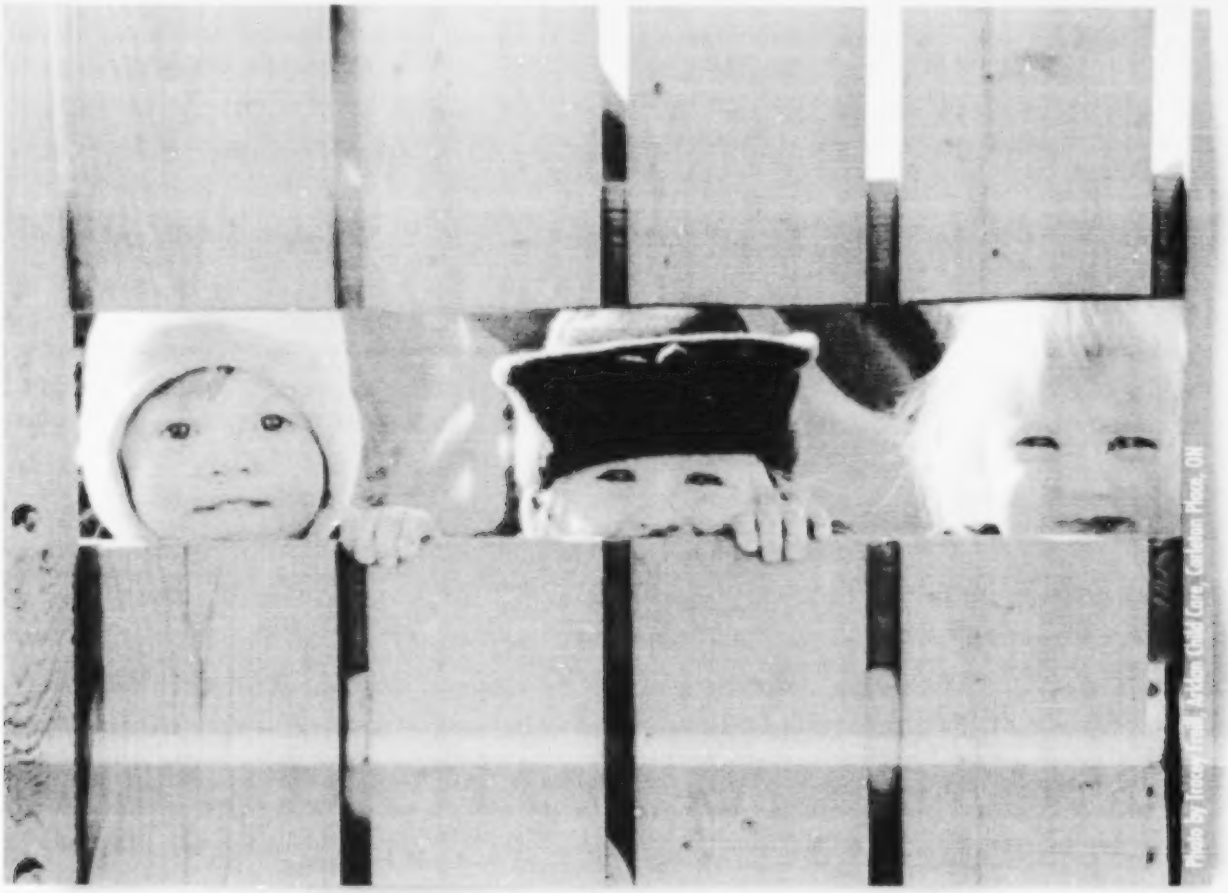

Photo by Tracey Freill, Arklan Child Care, Carleton Place, ON

Focus on quality child care and early learning

"While leaving work one day, I noticed these children in the toddler yard peeking through cut-outs in our fence. I feel this represents quality child care in Canada: happy, secure children who are encouraged to explore beyond their boundaries."

Tracey Freill, Arklan Child Care, Carleton Place, ON

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Child Care: Room for confidence

Throughout our work on issues related to children and families, the CCSD has always been a strong advocate of quality, affordable and universal child care in Canada. We view child care as an important part of the policy mix needed by Canadians. Over 20 years ago, in 1982, the Council staged the first major child care policy conference in Canada. It was held in Winnipeg, with over 1,000 delegates from across the country participating. At the time, there was real enthusiasm and confidence that child care services in Canada would be high on the public policy agenda in the near future.

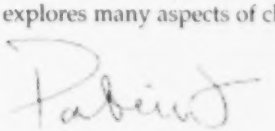
Unfortunately, nothing could have been further from the truth. Since then, child care has either lost ground or at best, survived by turning into a patchwork of services of varying cost, availability and quality, except in Québec. Yet while child care hasn't progressed much on the public policy front, and the provision of spaces has been spotty, we have certainly made great strides in our knowledge base and our understanding of the importance of child care and its connections to so many other aspects of our lives.

We were very pleased, therefore, when Martha Friendly and Susan Prentice approached us to propose the idea of staging a second policy conference on child care, "20 years" after that first Winnipeg event. The proposed conference, once again to be held in Winnipeg, would showcase new knowledge about the importance of child care and hopefully, spark renewed interest among decision-makers. In particular, the conference would highlight how child care acts as a social and economic driver for many interconnected issues, including child development, the economy, women's equality, labour market strategies, the alleviation of poverty, urban planning and social equity.

This conference could not have come at a better time. Just recently, the political context changed dramatically with the federal government's commitment to fund child care across the country. During the election campaign, Paul Martin said he would "build a strategy of child care and early learning," and that commitment was repeated in the Speech from the Throne in early October.

So there is room for confidence, but Canadians will need to keep governments' feet — federal and provincial — to the fire. We cannot let child care slip away once again.

We hope to see many of you at the conference in Winnipeg, November 12th to 14th, and that you will enjoy this special issue of *Perception*, which explores many aspects of child care in Canada.



Patrick Flanagan
Chair, CCSD

Child Care for a Change!

by Marcel Lauzière

The CCSD's national conference on child care this November in Winnipeg is a sign of the times.

More than 600 people will gather for discussion and debate on an issue that has largely been on the political sidelines, with the exception of Quebec and Manitoba. This will be a conference that affects the future of Canadian families.

But getting to this point has not been easy.

In Ottawa, the recent Speech from the Throne may have recognized the importance of early learning and child care, but for more than two decades, federal politicians and planners have been reticent to take it seriously.

It has been more than 20 years since the last major child care policy conference in Canada. This is the perfect opportunity to ask a very straightforward question: "What has changed?"

Back in the 1980s, parents were clamouring to get their children into quality, affordable daycare. Now those grown up children are having – or thinking of having – children of their own. But they won't face anything like the same child care problems as their parents did, or will they?

Despite repeated electoral promises and a flurry of government reports, the child care situation in most parts of Canada has not changed much since the early 1980s. This year, we mark the 20th anniversary of the first federal announcement of a national strategy for child care – yet as I write this, no strategy is in place. Martha Friendly, founder and coordinator of the Childcare Resource and Research Unit, puts it bluntly: "It's been pretty much a lost two decades for child care in Canada."

Photo by Wayne Eardley, YMCA of Peterborough

It's true that some child care spaces have been created over the years. But the number pales when compared to the quadrupling of child care spaces that occurred in the 1970s. Growth slowed in the 1980s, then practically ground to a halt in the mid-1990s, when the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) was dissolved. The one exception was in Quebec, which took advantage of the new federal matching funds system to build up their child care system, while the other provinces took the opportunity to cut back.

This means that parents outside of Quebec still must scramble to find regulated child care spaces for their children. In 1981, there were only enough regulated child care spaces to serve about 10% of the children of working mothers. In 2001, regulated child care spaces served about 12% of children of working mothers.

FAST FACTS

on Child Care in Canada

- Number of previous federal governments that have announced a national strategy for child care would be developed, then did no such thing: 3
- Years those announcements were made: 1984, 1986, and 1995
- Number of months since the present government promised it would create a national early learning and child care program: 6 (the announcement was made on June 3, 2004)

- Number of new child care spaces promised by the present government, by 2009: 250,000
- Number of child care spaces that Campaign 2000 estimates are currently needed in Canada: 1.4 million

- Amount pledged by the present government to create 250,000 child care spaces by 2009: $5 Billion
- Amount that represents annually: $1 Billion
- Amount that the province of Quebec spent on child care in 2001: $1.1 Billion

Financial barriers have not diminished either over those 20 years – quite the contrary. Eligibility levels for subsidies have dropped in seven provinces, and in many others, they have not been adjusted to the rising cost of living. A 2001 survey found that the financial burden of child care was 14% of average family income in Newfoundland, and 20% in British Columbia.

And the economic situation has gotten a lot tougher for most parents of young children. They are the "under 35" generation who entered the labour market during the 1980s and 1990s – and they make less on average than their counterparts of the 1970s. They are also more likely to have higher expenses, as cuts to social spending have resulted in user fees for many of the services young families count on.

"The decline in earnings for young workers is cited as one of the major explanations for their delay in having a family," concludes CCSD Vice President of Research, Katherine Scott.

For those who *do* opt to become parents, child care costs can push them below the poverty line. The financial squeeze is particularly painful for the growing number of single-parent families, which increased from 8.2% to 12.5% of all Canadian families with children between 1980 and 2002. Immigrant families are also vulnerable. The poverty rate among children of two-parent immigrant families was 39% in 2001 – more than twice the national average of 18%. And this at a time when many European countries have managed to keep their child poverty rates in single digits.

The silver lining in this rather bleak scenario is that the federal government has finally acknowledged that it is time to act. Child care was prominent in the federal budget and throughout the spring election campaign. And the most recent Speech from the Throne promised "a truly national system of early learning and child care." The appointment of former hockey star Ken Dryden as social development minister has created high expectations as he stick-handles what was once considered to be a "motherhood issue."

There are more reasons than ever for the federal government to invest in child care, and the need for provincial commitments is equally important.

First, there is the growing national and international consensus. A 2001 poll done by the Canadian Child Care Federation found that 90% of Canadians agreed or strongly agreed that we should have a nationally co-ordinated child care plan. In addition, 86% agreed or strongly agreed that there *can be* a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all Canadian children. This is in stark contrast to a Gallup poll done in 1982 in which almost half of Canadians surveyed (49%) felt that working mothers and their families should be responsible for their own child care arrangements; only 41% thought the government should share this responsibility.

Second, there is the example of Quebec. Internationally, Sweden and France have been recognized for creating quality, affordable child care. Now Quebec has managed to establish a universal and affordable system, despite the fiscal constraints familiar to all provinces.

Internationally, all members of the UN General Assembly committed themselves in 2002 to the development and implementation of national early childhood development policies and programs. Many developed countries are already well on their way: A 12-country survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2001 found that all aimed to publicly fund at least two years of preschool programming. Among the countries surveyed, governments typically paid the largest share of program costs, with parents covering 25% to 30%.

Finally, there is the wealth of research data which identifies new ways in which early childhood education and care (ECEC) benefit society. Two participants in the CCSD conference, University of Toronto economist Michael Krashinsky and his colleague Gordon

- Amount that child care experts believe will be necessary to provide the needed early learning and child care spaces at affordable rates: $12 Billion annually
- Percentage of GDP that $12 billion represents: 1%
- Percentage of GDP the European Union suggests governments should spend on early learning and child care: 1%

- Percentage of Canadian GDP contributed by mothers with young children: 5%
- Total dollars contributed to GDP by working mothers with young children: $53 Billion

- Percentage of household income that an average family in Newfoundland must pay for regulated child care: 14%
- Percentage of household income that an average family in British Columbia must pay for regulated child care: 20%

- Estimated amount that work-life conflicts cost Canadian organizations each year in time lost due to work absences: $2.7 Billion
- Ratio of benefits to costs of quality child care, estimated by 1998 Canadian study: 2 to 1

- Percentage of children aged 3 to 5 whose mothers work in the paid labour force: more than 70%
- For every 100 Canadian children, number of licensed child care spaces available: 12
- Number of licensed child care spaces available for 100 Canadian children, excluding Quebec: 8

- Compared to 12-year-old peers in New Zealand who received top-quality early childhood education, difference in Canadian scores on literacy and numeracy tests: 12 percentage points lower

- In a 1982 poll, percentage of Canadians who:
  - felt that working mothers and families should be responsible for child-care facilities: 49%
  - thought that government should share this responsibility: 41%

- In a 2003 poll, percentage of Canadians who:
  - agreed that Canada should have a nationally co-ordinated child care plan: 90%
  - agreed that there can be a publicly funded child care system that makes quality child care available to all Canadian children: 86%

Cleveland, measured $2 of benefits for every $1 the government spent to enhance child care. Half the benefit of the investment was realized in mothers' increased labour force participation. That kind of evidence helps make the case and policy-makers are starting to pay attention. Canadians have come to understand that ECEC makes an invaluable contribution to their children's development. Study after study has shown that quality early education and care enhances development both in the long- and short-term. The more attention, education and care that children get, the more positive the effect. Quality ECEC particularly enhances the development of children who face adverse conditions at home. It has even been shown to decrease eventual crime rates and increase income potential.

With these kinds of findings available, policy-makers are starting to pay more attention. Twenty years ago, they knew that child care could help women enter the workforce and improve their chances of gaining equality. There is now a better understanding that ECEC can help meet other desirable goals as well. The child care conference being organized by the CCSD is an opportunity to celebrate the great strides that researchers and advocates have made. This large gathering of policy-makers, activists, frontline workers and researchers is a testimony to the drive and determination of Canadians who truly believe that children are our future.

Marcel Lauzière is President of the Canadian Council on Social Development.

Child care centres at $5 per day — An irreplaceable educational service

by Renée Dandurand

This article was originally published in Le Devoir, *on Wednesday July 9, 2003. It was translated and is reproduced here with permission.*

Headlines about "child care centres at $5 a day" or for "a reduced contribution" may have suggested that the main feature of the daycare formula set up by Quebec in 1997 was financial accessibility. No doubt that was one of the main goals of this measure, but it does not define all of its meaning and scope. And now that there is a challenge to the daycare rate of $5 a day, it is important to recall the program's history and the multiple goals attached to it, in order to highlight the popularity of this program and the worries that have arisen from the announcement of increased privatization and abolition of the system's universality.

BRIEF HISTORY

In modern Quebec, one of the first demands for the creation of "public and free child daycare centres" came in 1965, during celebrations of the 25th anniversary of women's right to vote. Although this demand was repeated regularly by the women's movement, the creation of the first child care centres in the 1970s – other than a few pilot projects – came from initiatives organized by groups of parents, through companies which were almost all non-profits. The presence of the provincial government was limited, even after the office of daycare services for children was set up in 1980.

There are two categories of children who go to these daycare centres: those whose parents are relatively well-to-do, most often professionals; and those whose parents live below the poverty line, particularly lone-parent mothers who receive grants, usually from Canadian public assistance. It was only in the mid-1990s that the rate system for daycare was changed, with centres offering child care for only $5 per day. The new policy cannot be explained by a sudden rise in prosperity of the Quebec government; rather, it was the end result of a major change in mentality concerning early childhood education.

The decade of the 1990s, inaugurated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which Canada ratified in 1991, was marked in Quebec by several public actions in favour of children. For example, interventions sought to address child poverty (the document, *Quebec crazy about its children*, 1991), educational failures and dropping out of school (the Department of Education's plan of action for success in school in 1992), and the care of young children (the Department of Health and Social Services policy concerning the perinatal period, 1993).

These concerns were incorporated in the recommendations of two 1996 task forces – one dealt with children living in poverty and how to extricate them from welfare (Committee on reform of welfare), while the other dealt with the development of integrated educational services for early childhood (Superior Council of Education). In its report, the Council explicitly demanded "universal and free daycare services [which

should] encourage prevention at the primary level and equalization of opportunities." This emerging mobilization around childhood was evidence of a growing and widely shared perception: As a developing person, a child is the responsibility not only of his or her parents, but also of his or her community, of which they will be a future member. Thus, the importance of seeing to the child's healthy development.

Photo by Lisa Wacker, Trent Child Care Centre, Peterborough, ON

MULTIPLE GOALS

At the 1996 Summit of the Economy and Employment, the first mention was made of a project to establish limited contributions for daycare services. The measure echoed previous concerns about early childhood development, while underlining its economic implications for the poorest families, particularly those headed by lone-parent mothers. Among the goals identified were to "encourage conciliation between family and work; offer affordable, better quality services to small children to prepare their entry into the school system; motivate low-income workers and welfare recipients who have children to work; promote the growth of the social economy in a very important sector; decrease undeclared work in an area of activity [daycare] where it is prevalent."

The announcement of new provisions for family policy made by the Priorities Committee of the Executive Council in January 1997 restated some of the goals of the daycare system: for parents (work-family conciliation), and for young children (healthy development and the equalization of opportunities). It became clearer than ever that child daycare centres were not just a stop-gap measure for the convenience of working parents, they also offered educational services which were overseen (inspection and evaluation) and which would support the success of children in school, in addition to being affordable. The Centres for Early Childhood (CEC) thus became an essential mechanism, along with the family and schools, in the socialization of children. The Priorities Committee also suggested that to replace the baby bonuses, abolished that same year, affordable daycare services for all could be viewed as another way of increasing the province's birth rate.

INDISPUTABLE POPULARITY

There is no doubt that Quebec's policy of child daycare centres at $5 per day has become one of the most popular measures in recent years. It is popular with parents – in 2001/02, 55% of parents with children under age 5 entrusted them to a $5 per day child care service, and welcomed by supporters of young families (such as grandparents, friends, neighbours and colleagues) who recognize how austere and difficult the lives of these young parents can be, particularly for young mothers, as many studies have shown. It is no wonder that focus groups consulted by the Parti québécois before last April's elections highlighted the need to increase support for family-work conciliation. That led the party to suggest the creation of a "four-day week" for parents of young children, a measure the Young Chamber of Commerce had proposed a year earlier.

If a majority of parents with young children support child daycare centres at $5 a day, it is not simply because of the low cost, but more broadly, because it is an educational program as well. Many studies have shown the positive effects that attending an educational daycare program can have on the

development of children. In Canada, the 1994 report of the Ontario Royal Commission rated early childhood education as one of "the four moving elements with the power to deeply change schools [for] children who have been involved in a well-planned process of preschool teaching, notably develop skills, an easiness of adaptation and a positive attitude towards learning." In Quebec, a lack of sufficient places in the $5 per day childcare centres has thrown a shadow on their popularity, a difficulty often echoed in the media and constantly underlined by the Liberal Party since it assumed power.

Convenient for parents, these services thus faced an increasing demand for childcare spaces, a demand impossible to satisfy immediately. Despite an annual increase of 16,000 new places since 1997 – four times the annual average of the preceding years – nearly one-third of Quebec parents still had a child on a waiting list in 2002. However more than half of these parents had put their child on several waiting lists (and some had been placed on up to nine lists).

Not surprisingly, Quebec's daycare system – intended to be accessible to all within a few years – is widely envied by other Canadian provinces and by some American states. In this area, Quebec has a clear edge, even over as rich a province as Ontario, where during the Harris government's "common sense revolution," support for daycare centres declined.

UNIVERSALITY and PRIVATIZATION

Recent proposals by Claude Béchard, minister responsible for the family in Quebec's Liberal government, signal the end of the universality of $5/day child care centres and an opening for the development of private daycare. Although wording of the proposals is not yet final, it is important to raise questions about the projected orientation and their potential impact on the daycare system run by the centres.

Photo by Sheila Hunter, Trent Child Care Centre, Peterborough, ON

Such debates are not new in Quebec. In matters of health, discussions have already begun about increased privatization and gaps in universality, which all point to the same risk: that of a two-tiered system. Are daycare services similarly at risk? A number of people think so. Our neighbours in the United States, who have never had access to universal measures of daycare for young children, already have, in effect, a two-tier system. Sheila Kamerman, an American specialist on family policies, expresses it quite clearly: services that are accessible to well-to-do populations have educational goals and high costs, while those addressed to the underprivileged are often limited to simply supervising children, sometimes in totally unacceptable conditions.

We have not reached that point in Quebec; far from it. But the threat of an erosion of our daycare system must be carefully examined.

Renée Dandurand is a professor at the Institut national de la recherche scientifique.

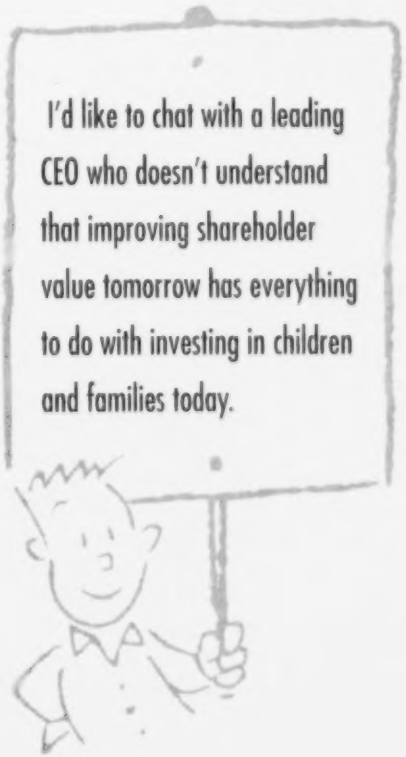
Count business in . . .

by Charlie Coffey

"With the second highest rate of child poverty in the industrialized world and two recent UN citations for our lack of action on children's early learning and care, Canada's reputation for social justice could become part of our history all too soon" (The Niagara Summit on Human Development, March 11, 2004). Talk about compelling words that demand equally compelling action.

Although there's no quick fix for Canada, I'm convinced that business – both large and small – has a vital role to play in what I refer to as the *collaborative solution* on the path to prosperity. Strong, diverse, public sector, community and business leadership needs to be at the same table when it comes to policy direction and issues about early learning and child care. And make no mistake about it – child care is part of the early learning equation. It's all about alignment, synergy and shared global knowledge – a more integrated national approach to strategy, communications, programming and measurement, with regional fine-tuning. And remember, history has proven time and time again that shifts or changes in public policy don't usually take off until the business community rallies behind them.

It's clear that business has a vested interest in supporting the development of sound public policy, as business has a stake in early learning and child care outcomes, i.e., education, employment, health, safety and community engagement. Show me a leading CEO who doesn't believe that cultivating, attracting and retaining top talent is a strategic priority. Show me a leading CEO who doesn't get the connection between corporate responsibility and building business, not to mention employee commitment. Show me a leading CEO who doesn't equate the value of business, government and community partnerships with advancing the economic and social justice agenda. I'd like to chat with a leading CEO who doesn't understand that improving shareholder value tomorrow has everything to do with investing in children and families today. Generating a high level of business interest can help make the difference.


I'd like to chat with a leading CEO who doesn't understand that improving shareholder value tomorrow has everything to do with investing in children and families today.

The bottom line is that business leaders need to step up to the plate. And they need to hear and discuss research findings – evidence. The contribution of early learning and child care to the creation and nurturing of human capital cannot be ignored. Here's some research at work that shows why investing in children is good economics and good business:

- "For every $1 spent on child care, there is a $2 economic benefit. The benefit comes back through increased tax revenues, and decreased social, education and health costs."[1]

- "A child's brain development in the first six years of life sets the foundation for lifelong learning, behaviour and health."[2]

- "If the first few years of life include support for growth in cognition, language, motor skills, adaptive skills and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and later contribute to society."[3]

- High-quality early childhood education produces "long-term positive outcomes and cost-savings that include improved school performance, reduced special education placement, lower school dropout rates, and increased lifelong earning potential. Employers increasingly find that the availability of good early childhood programs is critical to the recruitment and retention of parent employees."[4]

- "It's estimated that work-life conflicts cost Canadian organizations roughly $2.7 billion in lost time due to work absences."[5]

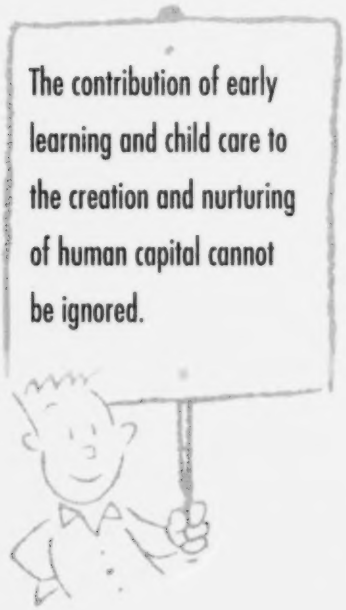
Research into the developing brain suggests that children get off to the best start by being taught in small groups at an early age, boosting their collaborative skills, while older children benefit from gradually being weaned

Photo by Ruth McFadden, Canadian Mothercraft of Ottawa-Carleton

off intensive teacher-led tuition and encouraged to be the kind of autonomous and inventive thinkers and learners that employers in the 21st Century are crying out for.[6] More research, including the report, "Never too early to invest in children: Early childhood education and care matters to business!" can be found on the *Voices for Children* website (www.voicesforchildren.ca). Important work revolving around early learning and child care is being done in Canada, as well as the United States, Italy, Great Britain and Australia, to name a few. In terms of child care, the recently published Child Care Coalition of Manitoba report, *Time for Action: An Economic and Social Analysis of Child Care in Winnipeg* (www.childcaremanitoba.ca), is an excellent source of timely information and analysis. Among other things, it gets the economics connection.

Facts, figures, and return on investment are the kind of language that business understands. And the message is simple: We all bear a burden for failing to provide the "right start" to our children. We need more business leaders to view early learning and child care as an economic issue, not just an education or social

issue. It's an important economic issue because early learning and care enables parents to work, learn and train while helping to prepare children for a brighter future. It's a wise investment in 2004 to ensure a competitive workforce and economy in 2014. A good example of the private sector getting down to business is "PNC Grow Up Great," the $100 million investment in early childhood education by The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. in Pittsburgh (www.pncgrowupgreat.com/grow_up_great.html). When considering investments in learning and education for children, business can also look to the inspired blending of research, practice and innovation at the Institute of Child Study in Toronto – a working model with broader application, that leads the way when it comes to enhancing children's thinking and building community connections.



We know that early learning and care has earned its place on the Canadian political landscape. The time is now to push the envelope on an agenda that must move forward (with the support of all three levels of government), which means making early learning and care a national and universal

Photo by Christine Neilson, Ottawa, ON

priority, targeting the children most in need and putting more money directly into high-quality child care. Canada requires a coordinated approach to ensure program quality and to serve more children/families, including a focus on Aboriginal children.

Business has a key role to play in helping to *nudge* government action on early learning and child care issues – in helping to influence public policy. Business could also support governments in developing national/regional programs to replace the existing "patchwork" of projects and initiatives. "Most parents want an early learning experience for their children and a majority need non-parental care to allow them to work or study. Current services aren't organized to meet the needs of either parent or child…as a first step, we propose blending four and five year old programming – kindergarten, child care and parenting supports – into a single program."[7]

Creating innovative strategies for early learning and child care contributes to Canada's path to prosperity. As such, why wouldn't innovative business leaders consider workplaces that employ on-site/near-site child care centres, child care subsidies, after-school programs, parental networks, information and referral services, job sharing, flexible hours, or extended parental leave/family care leaves? Why wouldn't innovative business leaders encourage investments in targeted children's initiatives and representation on children's advocacy boards? And why wouldn't innovative business leaders support partnerships with governments and

communities – and the sharing of best practices? These are all elements of a sound business strategy that develops human capital, promotes a healthier workplace and sustains a competitive advantage.

It's long overdue for the business leadership voice to be heard in greater numbers. Perhaps we'll see business well represented at the *Child Care for a Change: Shaping the 21st Century* conference in Winnipeg, as this event will influence public policy about early learning and child care and help set the agenda for the next decade.

"In today's world, where education and skill levels determine future earnings, the economic and social costs to individuals, communities, and the nation of not taking action on early childhood education are far too great to ignore, especially when the benefits far outweigh the costs."[8] As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child…so when igniting the early learning and child care flame with collaborative solutions and action, by all means *count business in*!

POSTSCRIPT

It's hard not to smile or even grin out loud, when you hear the federal government's Speech from the Throne that says, "The time has come for a truly national system of early learning and child care, a system based on the four key principles that parents and child care experts say matter – quality, universality, accessibility and development." The government has listened and the focus is on early learning and child care.

The next step is leadership in action...

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Early Childhood Education as a Crime Prevention Measure

Cute little toddlers are not usually associated with crime. But researchers have found a very strong correlation between their attendance in quality early childhood education programs and later resistance to criminality.

Lawrence Sherman, one of the leading American experts on crime prevention, cites quality early childhood education (ECE) as one of the programs most likely to reduce crime (*Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, 1997, www.ncjrs.org/works/download.htm). He says that if he were creating a "blue chip portfolio" of investments in crime prevention, quality early childhood education would be one of his first picks.

Photo by Patty Andrews, Learning Grove Childcare Centre, Digby, NS

Studies have repeatedly shown that high-quality ECE reduces the delinquency rate among disadvantaged children. It also increases their likelihood of completing high school and obtaining employment – which are strong protective factors against criminality (*Safety and Savings*, www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/ familyviolence/html/ fvcrimeprevention_e.html).

It's not hard to see why. Research has shown that the groundwork for serious conduct disorders in later adolescence or adulthood is set in the preschool period. Oppositional disorders arise in children as young as age 2 or 3, and gradually develop into full-blown conduct disorders. Trained ECE workers can detect such problems, provide some interventions themselves, and refer the child and his/her parents to other sources of help ("Disruptive Behaviour Disorders: Implications for the Child Care Community," see Child and Family Canada website at www.cfc-efc.ca/menu/specneed_en.htm).

The well-known fact that quality ECE increases a child's social and intellectual aptitudes – all the more so for children who face difficult conditions at home – is another clear contributor to the crime-preventing aspect of early childhood education. Educational failure leads to low self-esteem, emotional disturbance, and difficulty in the job market – all contributing factors in delinquency, according to criminologist Irvin Waller. According to the Correctional Service of Canada, the average education level of newly admitted offenders serving two years or more is Grade 7. Attainment of a high school diploma seems to provide a protective factor against criminality.

In some cases, the combination of ECE plus support for the parents can make an extraordinary difference. This is particularly so with young teenaged parents, whose children face an alarmingly high probability of later criminality – one American study reported that 90% of men aged 19 to 35 in prison were born to teenaged mothers.

Following this philosophy, the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Iata Centre in Winnipeg, the largest urban Aboriginal centre in Canada, has integrated quality child care programs into a residence for teen mothers. Along with the quality child care, the young mothers can also access a variety of social and psychological supports and services, school advocacy, and menu planning. The Centre offers parenting classes for the teenager and her partner, and makes every effort to involve other family members as well.

Rachel Richards entered the residence in September 2002 and graduated in July 2003. She is now back in high school full-time, and she attributes her success to the program.

"When I told my dad I was going to have a baby, he said 'That's it; your life is over.' This program made me realize that even though I'm pregnant, or have a baby, it doesn't mean I can't do things. They pushed me to keep going to school, which was good – I needed to be pushed."

Rachel's little boy now attends child care at her high school, one of a growing number of educational institutions which offer child care onsite.

At Saskatoon's Nutana Collegiate, which draws students from some of the "highest risk" areas of Saskatoon, Millie's Daycare provides 17 spaces for infants and toddlers. Parents, who must be students under the age of 21, often come to visit during their lunch breaks. Counselling services, information sessions, and referrals to daycare outside the school are also available.

Photo by Brigitte Insull, Seven Oaks Child Day Care Centre Inc., Winnipeg, MB

With the supports they get, teen mothers often do very well at school, says student centre administrator, Pat Craddock. Last year, one of the young mothers was awarded the Governor General's medal for academic achievement.

At Nutana, there is a waiting list of 60 to 80 people for the school daycare. This seems to be the case in most of the high schools where child care is offered: there simply isn't enough of it.

The lack of funding for quality child care and related parental support services raises questions about the effectiveness of our resource allocation for crime prevention. Although many people gauge their personal safety by the number of men and women in blue patrolling their streets, they might be wise to start thinking instead of the number of child care centres in their neighbourhood.

Saying Yes to Inclusion

When Sharon Hope Irwin was running a daycare centre in Glace Bay, Cape Breton, in the 1970s, a woman asked her to enrol her severely autistic child. The boy screamed and ran around without apparent provocation. "It was obvious to us that we couldn't take care of him," says Sharon. But the mother begged for him to be included, saying that she would lose her job otherwise.

Sharon didn't have the heart to say No. She went to social services and successfully argued for an extra pair of hands at the daycare – not a person with specialized skills, just someone who could offer much more individual attention to the child. The arrangement worked. In fact, the experience made the caregivers realize that it would be good for each of the children to get a little one-on-one attention, which turned out to be an improvement for everyone. By the time a specially created special-needs facility which could take the autistic boy opened at the end of the year, no one wanted him to leave.

So began Sharon Hope Irwin's long and illustrious career in the service of children with special needs. But she doesn't single herself out – hers is, in fact, a rather common story, she says. "Many of the child care centres which exemplify best practices in the care of children with special needs started simply because someone didn't have the heart to say No."

This makes the growing body of expertise about children with special needs a double-edged sword. Since the 1970s, training manuals and policy papers on children with special needs have proliferated. There has been national and international recognition of the issue. "There has been an increase in expectations," says Hope Irwin.

But paradoxically, there has been a decrease in actual capacity in many places. While some have moved further towards inclusion, many have backed away. The primary reason for this, says Hope Irwin, is that special needs programs are built on regular child care – which is itself suffering from demoralization and a lack of resources. A boost in funding to quality child care would be the first requisite in a strategy of inclusion.

Janice Douglas of the Canadian Association for Community Living (CACL) wholeheartedly agrees. Douglas debunks the belief that special needs children are necessarily "an add-on" requiring specialized staff. "If you have high-quality staff, then in many cases you should be able to create inclusive practices without bringing in extra staff," she says. True inclusion is more likely without specialized staff, she says, because it can single out the child, setting them apart from their peers.

Meanwhile, parents of disabled children struggle to find appropriate care for their children. "What child care?" asks Laurie Miller, a child care activist in rural Ontario. As the mother of a severely disabled child, she has heard the whole litany of excuses for her child's exclusion – including some very paradoxical ones. "They talk about integration and inclusion as reasons for *not* allowing special needs children in!"

She now drives from Renfrew to the neighbouring town of Ogdensburg, 20 minutes away, for her child care. It's not that the Ogdensburg facility has any special programs, she says, it's simply that they were willing to take her child.

Hope Irwin says this sort of situation reminds her of the civil rights struggles in the South. "Nowadays, you don't hear 'my black child can't get in,' but you do hear 'my disabled child can't get in.' " She compares the brave black parents who sent their kids to "white" schools to parents who push to have their special needs children included. "If you admit a child, people will seek out the necessary resources," she says. Even if those resources are not the ideal ones, inclusion will be much better than exclusion – for both the parent and the child.

Parents of children with disabilities already face enough problems without having to struggle with a lack of child care, says Hope Irwin. "Some people say the quickest way to become poor is to have a child with a disability."

But like race, disability is one of those issues that keeps getting shuffled on and off the public agenda. In the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care signed just over one year ago, "inclusivity" was one of the five principles agreed to by the provinces, territories, and federal government. In this year's Liberal Party platform, however, that principle had again slipped off, says Hope Irwin.

She and other special needs advocates are pushing to ensure that the "quad" principles of "quality, universality, affordability and developmental" are expanded back out into a "quint" principle with the addition of "inclusivity."

Photo by Debra Schuler-Murray, The Faversham School of Fine Arts, Victoria, BC

"Quality is the cornerstone, without which there cannot be inclusion, but it is not in itself sufficient," says Janice Douglas of the CACL.

Hope Irwin sees this issue through the perspective of many years of struggle in the movement for child care in Canada. "People who have watched the whittling away of child care are concerned that children with disabilities will be at the bottom of the heap of priorities unless that principle is explicitly included," she says.

The autistic boy Hope Irwin first admitted into her child care has now grown into a responsible young man who holds down a steady job. He lives in one of the supportive group homes in her community. She also recently celebrated the university admission of one of her former child care students who has Cerebral Palsy. He is the first student with such a degree of disability to be admitted to the university, she says. So she will continue to speak out to ensure that inclusivity is at the core, rather than the periphery, of any new child care policy in Canada.

Looking Backward, Moving Forward

by Martha Friendly

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John Ralston Saul observed that "History is an unbroken line from the past through the present into the future. It reminds us of our successes and failures...warns us, encourages us."[1] Examining the history of early childhood services reveals three elements that provide a context not only for understanding the present, but imagining the future.[2]

The first of these elements is that child "care" while mothers worked and "education" to develop the child, have intersected a number of times, but they began – and largely remain – two separate "silos" in Canada. Although the standards that are in place in every province are intended to make regulated child care developmental, its primary purpose is to look after children while parents work or train. At the same time, the kindergartens and nursery schools that are intended to provide early childhood education are rarely sensitive to the labour force needs of parents. And to complicate matters further, in the 1990s, a chaos of other services called "child development" have emerged.

Ironically, one of the most conspicuous things about child care and early childhood education today is that there is consensus that young children can be educated and cared for at the same time. However, while rhetoric about integrating children's services has been a common theme in Canada – and western Europe shows that child care and early childhood education can be organized to be seamless – generally, the service environment for Canadian families and children has become even more chaotic today than it was 20 or 30 years ago.

The second observation is more about the ideas that rationalize service provision than about services per se. Over the years, the discourses have shifted again and again as social needs, cultural attitudes and even fashions have come and gone. These discourses have run the gamut from the need for mothers in the workforce (for World War II war industries), through alleviation or prevention of poverty (as was the focus of the Canada Assistance Plan), women's equality (personified by the 1970 report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women), "moving from welfare to work," "readiness to learn," children-at-risk, and family support.

The rationales have been as narrow as "helping single moms move from welfare to work," to as broad as "providing the ramp to equality in the workforce for women;" from as narrow as "a head start for children at-risk" to a more inclusive goal of "school readiness for all children;" from healthy child development to "lifelong good health;" from crime prevention to community solidarity and social cohesion. The most recent discourse that has been popular – and although it has been challenged, has had some success in advocating for children – is that human development is fixed for life in the first few years; that is, "the years before five last the rest of their lives."

The public discourse in Canada has thus far ignored what in Europe is an overarching concept that drives many decisions about children. This is the idea that, even in the first six years, children are citizens with citizenship rights and that, as citizens, they have a claim to a fair share of society's resources. It also presumes that children have a value here and now, not only for what they might become later

on – better students or better citizens or less inclined to criminal behaviour. One way to think about this is that "children are people, not merely adults-in-training."

The idea of early childhood services as a child's right – "community institutions in their own right" as Moss and Penn describe it[3] – is related to the third observation that flows from the history of Canadian early childhood services. Most of our early childhood services have been segregated or targeted to one group or another of children and families – children with moms in the workforce, children "at-risk," children whose parents can afford to pay, children who can get a subsidy, teen moms, and so on. This practice is not consistent with a rights perspective that, as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child conceives it, should be applied to all children. The practice of segregating children based primarily on their parents' circumstances is curiously out of step with the ideas of equity and social cohesion that are currently in vogue. In child care and early childhood education, targeting is obviously an idea whose time has gone.

MOVING FORWARD

The context provided by our history suggests that it's time to move forward in these three areas. It's clear that the existing service chaos serves no one well – not parents, children, nor the public purse. It's time to begin to ensure that every community in every region has holistic early childhood services that incorporate three essential building blocks: child care, early childhood education, and support for parenting, coordinated with other family and children's health, social and recreational services.

Targeting services to one group or another always leaves someone out, and in Canada, many more children are left out than are served. Targeting early childhood services is neither sensible nor just.

Photo by John Bonnar, Ode Day Care Centre, Toronto, ON

And finally, it's time to move the discourse about the purposes of early childhood services beyond serial rationales. A more complete view would embrace not only health and well-being, school readiness for all children, woman's equality, and poverty alleviation *simultaneously*, but would be dignified by consideration of values, human rights and the child's rights as a Canadian citizen as well.

IMAGINE....

If Canadian governments were to fulfill their commitments to children, and a national strategy for coherent, universal early childhood services designed to meet both the children's and parents' needs were to become a reality, what could it look like "on the ground"?

> The Elsie Stapleford Children's Centre – adjacent to the neighbourhood public school – opens its doors at 7:30 am, when Marla arrives with 3-year-old Marina. After Marina joins her teacher and other children who have arrived, Marla goes to the resource room to check out a book before she leaves for her training program at 8:30. The resource room staff isn't in yet, but Marla will be able to talk with her on the phone or later on.
>
> At 9:00, Liu arrives with her neighbour Adriana, their two 3-year-olds and Liu's new baby. Adriana has been an at-home

mom, and Liu is on maternity leave from her job with the provincial government. Their children join the preschoolers outside, and Liu pours a cup of coffee while she waits for her new mothers' group to gather.

They're joined by Jack, whose daughter Daphne will spend a nine-to-three day in the preschool room. Jack is a successful writer, and is looking for a little companionship before he begins his solitary work day.

Photo by John Bonnar, Orde Day Care Centre, Toronto, ON

At 9:30, a group of four family day care providers arrive with their 13 children. While the children engage in activities in the well-equipped gross motor room with a teacher and an early childhood student, the providers hold their weekly meeting and study session. The public health nurse from the City's Health Department arrives to hold the weekly well-baby visits. A separate health room is used regularly by health care providers who work closely with the Children's Centre.

The children spend a splendid day together engaged in educational, play-based activities. They are not aware whether their parents are in the workforce or not, are self-employed, are single or a couple, working, middle class, or wealthy. Children in the toddler and baby rooms also have a great day.

The parents and providers will come together on Wednesday evening for the monthly Centre meeting and listen to a speaker about language development. The parent committee for each room meets monthly too; together, the parents and teachers discuss the program, menus, and new developments like hiring.

This kind of children's centre – incorporating care, early childhood education, and support for parenting – could be located within a school or in its own space. It could be run by a community group, local government, or a school board. It could have flexible hours, earlier or later opening and closing times, different arrangements of centre-based, family day care and resource provision, and, depending on the community, different linguistic and cultural approaches. It could even experiment with innovative approaches to early childhood education and child care. And across Canada, services incorporating care, education and parenting would be seamlessly available in every community, in rural, urban and less densely populated areas, and in those areas with seasonal work patterns as well – all affordable, publicly funded and publicly accountable, developmental, and labour-force sensitive.

Is this an impossible dream? We now have considerable information from multiple sources about best practices. Our history reveals what not to do, and lots of examples show what works best for children and parents. The child care community knows what needs to be done. What is missing is public policy – and here, the laggards are our governments.

This year, the challenge will be to urge our governments to muster the imagination and the political will to "do the right thing" to move vision into reality.

Martha Friendly founded the Childcare Resource and Research Unit (CRRU) in 1983, and she has been the coordinator of CRRU for more than 20 years. CCRU at the University of Toronto is a policy and research oriented facility that focuses on early childhood education and care (ECEC).

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[1] Saul, JR. "How we will make Canada ours again," in *The Globe & Mail*, March 25, 2000.

[2] Some of this material was taken from a paper delivered by me as the annual Stapleford Lecture, University of Regina, March 6, 2000, titled *Early childhood education and child care: Rights, responsibilities, and action.*

[3] See Moss, P. And Penn. H. *Transforming Nurseries*. London: Paul Chapman, Ltd., 1996.

Labour's Universal Child Care Vision

by Marie Clarke Walker

Many Canadian working parents struggle daily to juggle child care and work. Too many have no access to affordable, high-quality child care – especially if they work non-traditional hours. What's more, they don't always feel comfortable or sure that their children are enjoying stimulating and enriching environments.

A universal learning and care system could go a long way to providing some much-needed peace of mind. For decades, the Canadian Labour Congress has been advocating such a system as a critical support to working families, especially mothers, and as a service providing long-lasting benefits for all members of society, primarily children.

Years of research and reports attest to the wide-ranging positive benefits of early education and care for children, parents, business, the economy and society in general. Many advanced industrialized nations, such as France and Denmark, make substantial public investments in comprehensive systems of early childhood education and care because they know that the returns are high.

In Canada, economists have calculated that every $1 invested in quality child care yields a $2 benefit to families, children and society. This payback comes from tax revenues from increasing numbers of parents who join and remain in the workforce, and from reduced social service costs, since well-raised and educated children will make performing students who will grow up to be responsible, productive and healthy adults. By the same token, literally, quality child care also helps reduce child poverty,

Photo by Maria Lysiak, Regina Early Learning Centre

strengthens social cohesion and builds strong communities.

So far, however, Canada has not invested nearly enough in its children. What does this mean for Canada's families?

First, there isn't nearly enough regulated child care available — there are about 5 million children in Canada aged 0-12 and only about 690,000 regulated child care spaces. Worse, the child care that does exist is unaffordable — a family with two children can easily pay between $8,000 and $10,000 a year for child care. In large cities, parents can pay considerably more than that for just one infant in child care.

It seems, however, that the tide is finally turning, now that child care is high on the federal government's priority list. Still, we'll need strong political will to ensure that what we have now — a patchwork of unaffordable, limited services — is transformed into a coherent national program that meets the needs of all Canadians.

The Canadian Labour Congress, which represents 3 million unionized workers, will

be doing its part to encourage the government to take the necessary steps to put such a program in place. Support from Canada's unionized workers for accessible, high-quality child care services is high; not only because of membership awareness campaigns, child care arrangements mandated in some collective agreements or participation in local and national child care advocacy, but also because our members are parents who know or have known the needs for universal, regulated, high-quality, and affordable child care.

Several affiliated unions of the Canadian Labour Congress also represent frontline child care workers, who have been consistently active in working with parents to promote high standards of training, adequate funding and regulation of child care services. Thus, labour has been instrumental in pushing for a program of affordable, accessible child care in Quebec, the one province that has moved towards a universal child care system through a program of $7-a-day child care. The federal government should support this program, and act to provide Canadians with the same services and family benefits that Quebec provides to its citizens.

Labour's goal during this important period is to mobilize union members to actively pressure politicians – of all stripes and at all levels – to make the child care promise a reality.

In late September, before the Throne Speech, the Canadian Labour Congress forwarded a letter to Prime Minister Paul Martin outlining what the main features of a modern Canadian child care system should be:

- **Adequate funding** to ensure services are of high quality and affordable to parents, and that child care staff are well trained and fairly compensated. The government has promised to spend $5 billion over five years on top of current funding commitments. The Canadian Labour Congress supports an increase in spending to $5 billion per year over the next five years, as the first part of a national funding plan tied to specific service targets and a specific timetable for implementation.

- **Universally accessible and inclusive**. Canadians accept that all children benefit from education. Our public education system is not targeted to specific groups or designed as a welfare program — early learning and care services must not be targeted either. A national child care program must also be inclusive of children with disabilities and culturally sensitive to Canada's diverse populations.

- **A legislative framework**. A national child care system must include guaranteed standards and funding, and strong accountability mechanisms. Currently, the availability and quality of child care services in most of Canada are uneven due to scarce funding and uncoordinated policies and standards in many jurisdictions. Any legislation should also respect Quebec's autonomy and leadership in child care.

- **Public and non-profit delivery of services**. Public auspice ensures more equitable access and higher quality. Any commercial dimension would, by its nature, increase the cost of services because of the necessity of making a profit. Even quality control will be secondary to profitability. As well, public/non-profit delivery mitigates the risk of trade challenges.

Labour views the current child care promise in front of Parliament as sacred and being made to our children. As such, we are ready to support progressive policies designed to make a real and lasting difference to Canada's children, parents and our communities. We have always believed that children are a shared social responsibility. The time has come for the federal government to do its share.

Marie Clarke Walker is executive vice-president of the Canadian Labour Congress, the largest trade union federation in Canada, representing three million workers and their families.

Quality Care, coast to coast to coast

by Janet Creery

Inspiring Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) activities are blooming across the country, despite the harsh funding climate. We spoke with child care educators, administrators and advocates in every province and territory who are keeping the field growing and evolving. We make no claim to a systematic survey, and there are doubtless many more good stories to tell. But we hope this article will reflect the ingenuity and tenacity of child care workers across the country.

A glance at the ECEC wage levels across Canada reveals that teachers in the Atlantic generally earn much less than their colleagues elsewhere in Canada (see table on p. 27). This is particularly true in Newfoundland, where wages fall in last place on the scale – at under $7 an hour. Yet Newfoundland is also home to an exciting child care education program which is helping to raise both salaries and standards.

College of the North Atlantic teacher Joanne Morris created Newfoundland's distance education program for ECEC (http://dls.cna.nl.ca/student.zone/earlychild.asp) 12 years ago, in recognition of the province's far-flung population. "The majority of Newfoundlanders are scattered around the coast in small centres," says Morris. "They wouldn't be able to do this education if they had to move to St. John." All of her distance students are women, most with small children.

The students send in a portfolio of their previous work, which gives them exemptions from some courses and helps educators to create individualized learning packages for each one. They do most of the coursework in their own communities, where they are required to continue working or volunteering in ECEC. In both practice and theory, they are asked to integrate strategies for special needs children into every aspect of their work.

Three summer institutes at the College give students a chance to meet their educators, participate in seminars and workshops, and complete a placement in a high-quality child care facility. When they return to practice in their own communities, a field placement supervisor evaluates their work and also provides coaching and support. This "mentoring" model, introduced a few years ago, has vastly improved the course completion rate.

"When I go out, I see that it's really improving the quality of care," says Morris.

There is also a material pay-off for the child care workers. If they complete the first year of the certificate, the provincial government tops up their salary by a little over $2,000; if they complete the full two years, they get more than $4,000 a year extra from the province.

The top-ups still leave staff wages relatively low, and child care costs remain too high for many parents. Morris hopes that the federal government will establish a national program to make universality and

decent wages a reality, even in less-wealthy provinces like Newfoundland. "Maybe we can't do what Quebec has done, but we can do something that helps parents and increases wages."

In nearby Nova Scotia, funds for child care are similarly tight, yet the province harbours a hub of activism around the issue of inclusion. Sharon Hope Irwin directs SpecialLink, the National Centre for Child Care Inclusion, from the Cape Breton community of Glace Bay. She has made a career out of proving that special needs children can – and should – be included in child care.

It all started with her willingness to take on a special needs child who had nowhere else to go (see article on page 16). She sought out grants to integrate assistive computer technology into her program, and by doing so, was able to include high-needs children such as those with severe cerebral palsy. By the late 1980s, her child care centre in Glace Bay had become a Canadian – even international – model of inclusion in child care.

The beauty of her centre's remote location is in the message it sends to others. "This place is 250 miles from any hospital, with a 50% unemployment rate. If we can do it, anybody can," she says.

SpecialLink has produced a video about one special needs child who became the first student with cerebral palsy to be admitted to the local university. "He is deciding whether he wants to be a lawyer or a sportscaster," says Hope Irwin.

Sadly, the centre has to hire private nurses now, because of cutbacks. Indeed, Hope Irwin finds that despite a proliferation of reports and guidebooks about special needs inclusion, actual capacity has declined in many places. "The social capital is becoming depleted."

Hope Irwin is currently working to ensure that inclusion becomes one pillar of any new government strategy to create a national child care system.

In neighbouring New Brunswick, where the quality of child care was recently ranked the worst in Canada (*Today's Parent* magazine, April 2004), another very small town is nonetheless pioneering a much-needed and original approach to child care. In the rural Francophone community of Val d'Amour, the Les Débrouillards child care centre has adapted an anti-bullying program originally designed for 5- to 9-year-olds to suit younger children in their preschool years.

Yvette Lesvesque, Director of the Centre and an ECEC teacher at the local community college, offers the program to all children in her centre, from preschool to the after-school programs. She took this initiative after several incidences of vandalism in the area led community leaders to agree that preventive action was in order.

The "Me, I control my aggression" program, funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy, has been far more successful than anyone had originally hoped, says interim centre director Mona Normandeau. The games and stories help children develop self-esteem and social graces, and have put an end to displays of aggression at the centre, says Normandeau. The parents of one youngster who had been particularly troublesome wrote a letter of congratulations to the centre.

Research increasingly suggests that conduct disorders tend to emerge in the preschool period, and are best dealt with through early intervention. A 1998 research paper stated, "It is starting to appear that the primary pathway for serious conduct disorders in adolescence and adulthood is set in the preschool period." The author, David Hawkins-Clarke, piloted his own intervention project, The Children's Relationship and Emotional Skills Training Program (R.E.S.T.), at a school in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

One challenge for the Val d'Amour program is staff turnover – "At only $8 an hour, we lose staff," says Levesque. But the program continues to develop. This summer, Levesque hired a musician to create lyrics and music for some of the program's stories, and the centre put together a play which went on to win a number of local awards. Levesque intends to spend the next year putting together a complete program kit, which she will then promote throughout the province. She aims to have the program operating in all child care centres across the province by 2006.

Child care in Prince Edward Island is in an enviable position compared to other Atlantic provinces. Although still low, teachers' salaries

NO ROOM FOR KIDS?

Percent of children aged 0-12 for whom there is a regulated child care space, by province/territory, 1992-2001

Province/Territory	1992 (%)	1995 (%)	1998 (%)	2001 (%)
NFLD & LB	3.3	4.3	5.0	5.5
PEI	16.2	15.5	15.4	14.0 [1]
NS	6.8	6.8	7.3	8.1
NB	5.5 [2]	6.3 [2]	7.7 [2]	9.9 [2]
PQ [3]	6.8 [2]	9.4 [2]	14.9 [2]	21.1 [2]
ON	8.1	7.7	8.5	8.9
MB	9.1	9.5	10.5	12.4
SASK	3.1 [2]	3.8 [2]	3.9 [2]	4.2 [2]
AB	9.7	9.6	8.8	9.1
BC	7.4	9.6	10.8	12.1
NWT *	5.7	n/a	n/a	n/a
NU *	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
YT *	16.7 [2]	n/a	n/a	n/a
Canada	**7.5**	**8.4**	**10.0**	**12.1**

Notes:

[1] PEI introduced publicly funded half-day kindergarten in Sept 2000. (Kindergarten in PEI is still part of the regulated child care system as it was before 2000.) For the purpose of comparison with other jurisdictions where kindergarten is under the public education system, it has not been included in the calculation of the percent of children for whom there is a child care space. Therefore PEI's figures for 1998 and 2001 are not comparable.

[2] Nursery schools (part-time) are not regulated in New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan and the Yukon Territory so are not included in these figures.

[3] Quebec's figures include school-age spaces which are under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. By 2000, all regulated child care spaces that are part of CPEs became primarily publicly funded.

* Information for number of children 0-12 years not available for the Territories. Therefore, percent of children for whom there is a regulated child care space cannot be calculated and have been reported as n/a in the table.

Source: Table 30, from *Early childhood education and care in Canada 2001*, by Martha Friendly, Jane Beach and Michelle Turiano. Toronto: Childcare Resource & Research Unit, December 2002. <www.childcarecanada.org/ECEC2001>

are comparable to those in many other parts of Canada. The proportion of children in PEI for whom there is a regulated child care space is the second highest in the country, after Quebec. And the quality of the care is enhanced by a provincial regulation that all child care workers must receive at least 30 hours of professional development every three years.

The Child Development Centre in Charlottetown goes far beyond those minimum requirements. Over the last five years, this "lab school" for the Holland College ECED program has integrated a number of cutting-edge approaches to early childhood education.

The Director of the Centre, Kim Watts, brought back the "project approach" from a workshop she attended in Illinois. It challenges children to come up with questions and activities related to field trips or other special projects. Although it is only used occasionally, Watts says this approach is important because it allows children to pursue their favoured activity, and "gives them the opportunity to shine."

One of the learning managers then adapted the "High Scope" approach, which encourages children to problem-solve by themselves. When they come in each day, the children decide which of three areas they would like to go to that day, and they indicate this by moving their assigned symbol – an animal or popular object such as a school bus – to that area. The symbol is also used to indicate where they sit and where their possessions are kept, so they learn to look for the symbol when they need to get something or decide where to go. Other uses of this approach include having children mix the ingredients for playdough on their own, using a set of symbolic instructions.

Finally, the Centre has adapted the "Emilia Reggio" approach, which trains teachers to act as facilitators, thus giving children room to guide activities.

Watts says that child care in PEI is strengthened by a strong and tight-knit early childhood development association, and by good relationships between providers and social services. Funding does, however, remain a concern, as it is elsewhere in the country.

Integration with social services

At this point in time, no province can rival Quebec in the sheer scope of child care delivery. Providing a child care space for 21% of all children in the province may not seem impressive in absolute terms, but it is far above what any other province

attains. The size of the network has been doubled in the six years since $5-a-day childcare was introduced, says Larry Depoe, Director of the Child Care Centre at McGill.

"Parents have, in a very short time, come to see child care as a right," says Depoe. Despite its phenomenal growth, the system still struggles to satisfy the need, which leads to some misunderstandings, he says. "When parents call up wanting to register a child and there is no space, they say: 'What? You MUST give me child care.' "

Although quality is uneven in this rapidly expanding system, Depoe says that "the cheapest child care centres before were really poor quality. They are much better now." The government has been conducting quality studies and is now looking at introducing standards such as staff-child ratios and space requirements.

Salaries are the most striking evidence of the province's appreciation for early childhood educators. Starting salary is now $13.86 per hour, and workers are covered by a government pension plan. "That's a $24% rise in pay since the start of the new program," says Maryann Bird, Executive Director of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada.

There's more, says Depoe. Workers – the majority of whom are female – have what is called "preventative maternity leave." Because there are first-trimester risks inherent in working with children, maternity leave (at 93% of salary) begins as soon as a woman discovers that she is pregnant. Not surprisingly, Depoe has hired staff who moved from Toronto and Ottawa in order to work under the Quebec system.

It's an act that's hard to follow for neighbouring Nunavut. Whereas every community in Quebec's Northern region of Nunavik was given at least one new child care facility by 2002, the new Northern territory still struggles to find care for its children.

Phoebe Hainu, Assistant Deputy Minister in the Adult Education, Career and Early Childhood Services department of Nunavut, says that existing child care serves only about 10% of children aged 0 to 6. "Especially in a place like Iqualuit, there are long waiting lists for daycare," she says.

Nonetheless, there are promising developments. The new government of Paul Ukalok has made a "strong recommendation" that all new public buildings include space for child care. And Hainu's department is creating stronger curriculum links between early childhood education and elementary school.

The government is also looking for ways to make preschool more relevant to Nunavut culture. Centres can get funding under the Early Childhood Initiative to bring elders in to tell the children stories. Nunavut Tungavik Incorporated is working on a project to create an all-Inuktitut child care facility in Iqualuit, where English dominates.

In Ontario, availability is less of an issue – but prices are prohibitive. A website on relocation within Canada (www.relocatecanada.com) warns that in London and Kitchener, child care costs average about $650 per month, in Toronto $720, in Ottawa $750, and in Chatham, they average $826 per month! Average fees in Chatham are about twice as high as those in Regina or Winnipeg, and about four times higher than in Montreal.

Child care fees in Ontario might be even higher if it weren't for the moderating influence of the municipalities. Ontario is the

only province which actively involves municipalities in the delivery of child care. The province flows money to regional governments for child care fee subsidies, wage subsidies, special needs, and family resource programs.

In the era of cutbacks from 1998 to 2003, some municipalities stepped up their involvement. The City of Toronto contributed funds to ensure that ECE workers' salaries kept pace with inflation and that service levels were kept roughly in tune with demand. Likewise, when the province decided that school-based child care centres should start paying rent for their facilities, the city agreed to pay the amount demanded.

The City of Toronto put about $15 million of its own money into the child care system this year, says Brenda Patterson, General Manager of the City's Children's Services Division. The city also directly operates 58 child care centres, making it one of the largest child care providers in the country.

The Children's Services Division puts out a yearly "Children's Report Card" which tracks a number of indicators of child well-being. Nor surprisingly, they have identified poverty as a major problem, and have now been asked to suggest ways of alleviating it.

Joanne Aruda, CEO of Family Day Care Services in Toronto, feels that Toronto's system is in many ways exemplary – although the problem of affordability remains. "We are able to accommodate most

UNJUST REWARDS?

Mean gross hourly wages for centre-based child care staff, by province/territory, 1998[1]

Province/Territory	Assistant Teacher	Teacher	Teacher-Director	Administrative Director
NFLD & LB	$6.37	$6.76	$7.89	$12.07
PEI	$8.18	$7.54	$11.84	$14.37
NS	$7.04	$8.51	$10.21	$14.58
NB	$6.34	$7.12	$9.26	$10.06
PQ	$8.12	$11.04	$14.05	$17.41
ON	$10.60	$13.48	$17.48	$22.00
MB	$8.37	$9.49	$13.83	$17.34
SASK	$8.45	$10.74	$11.74	$14.58
AB	$7.90	$8.36	$9.90	$12.73
BC	$10.55	$12.07	$14.41	$18.73
NWT	$12.07	$13.40	$19.32	n/a [2]
YT	$9.97	$11.71	n/a [2]	n/a [2]
Canada	**$9.59**	**$11.62**	**$14.52**	**$18.45**

[1] These figures are the most recent comparable figures available. Some provinces have reported more current data, which may not be comparable across jurisdictions.

[2] Sample sizes too small to report.

Source: *You Bet I Care!* by Gillian Doherty, Donna Lero, Hillel Goelman, Annette LaGrange and Jocelyne Tougas, Centre for Families, Work and Well-Being, University of Guelph, reprinted in *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001*, Martha Friendly et al., Childcare Resource & Research Unit, December 2002.

parents looking for care," she says. "Cost is definitely the biggest barrier at this time."

Rural Manitoba struggles with an opposite set of physical circumstances – but some similar challenges for parents. City dwellers know how annoying it is to have to drive all over the city to go to a child care centre, then to a school, then a doctor's office, so they can well imagine what that might mean in vast, sparsely populated prairie areas.

Jane Wilson, coordinator of Rural Voices, a network for child care in rural areas of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, wants people to understand what rural really means: "If there's a KFC, a McDonald's or a Dairy Queen, it's not rural."

Her project pioneered the "Integrated Hub" model in Manitoba, drawing on an idea that Carol Gott, her partner in the project, has already implemented in rural Ontario. They created a child care centre that was set up in an elementary school, included Child and Family Canada offices, health services, and a nutrition program for parents and grandparents.

The whole program collapsed when the province decided to close the elementary school. "Governments tend to deliver services in silos," says Wilson. "There are more sad than happy stories."

IN MANITOBA

Photo by Arlette Sinquin, Wakefield, PQ

Manitoba has among the highest legislated standards in Canada for early childhood educators, child care centres and family child care homes, according to the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council (www.mwac.mb.ca/child.html). Child care services are available in Aboriginal languages, Hebrew, Mandarin, German, Ukrainian, French and English. On a per capita basis, Manitoba also offers one of the highest number of licensed daycare spaces in Canada.

The Manitoba government is now enhancing child care in the province by building "parent-child coalitions," which bring together community members to address the needs of preschool-aged children. Jan Sanderson, Director of Healthy Child Manitoba, says the program ensures that child care services are not planned in a top-down manner, the services engage parents and communities, and vary according to local needs.

One high-needs neighbourhood project hires mums part-time to act as outreach workers promoting early childhood education. A project among inner-city Aboriginal communities has partnered with local Métis publishing house Pemmican Publishing to encourage literacy by giving "birthday book bags" to all preschool and elementary school children. Another project involves Aboriginal youngsters aged 6 to 10 in after-school care, focussed on deterring negative behaviours. And rural francophone communities identified a need for more resources, so Healthy Child Manitoba helped them develop mobile bins full of francophone resources such as toys, books and parenting guides.

"Research supports the view that healthy families are the basis of healthy children. Governments can't do it alone," says Susan Tessler, manager of the parent-child coalition project.

Some examples of integrated services did survive, including ones which stay open late to accommodate parents' schedules, and teach the ABC's of farm safety to bring down shockingly high rates of accidents on farms.

Wilson, again working with Gott, has now received funding to create three demonstration models of an "integrated hub" child care centre in different parts of Canada, one of which will probably be located in one of the Northern territories.

Although the Rural Voices project no longer receives funding, it has left some lasting legacies. It built a network which to some degree continues to operate on its own. It created a book called *Rural Treasures*, which describes a number of exemplary rural child care practices. (The book is available from Wilson, 807-548-2114.)

Several of the examples sited in *Rural Treasures* are in rural Saskatchewan. One, called Alley Cats, brings together a pottery studio, a cappuccino bar and a child care. Originally a for-profit enterprise, it converted to non-profit status as a result of its contact with Rural Voices. Another in Tarot River, Saskatchewan, incorporates a group family day home and child care for 12 children.

In Alberta, an effort is underway to raise the quality – and the credibility – of child care. The Alberta government has approved a new accreditation process which includes 10 standards, complete with criteria and indicators.

Susan Elson, Chairperson of the Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services (www.abccaccred.ca) says that accreditation will build support for child care in the province. Communications around the accreditation system highlights the importance of regulated child care and the substantial research showing how good early childhood education and care enhances the literacy skills – and even the eventual employability – of children.

Another important impact of accreditation will be to raise the salaries of child care providers. Alberta currently has the lowest salaries for ECE teachers outside of the Atlantic provinces. The

provincial government has agreed to increase wage enhancements for successfully accredited organizations. Elson says that her organization plans to accredit 10-20% of child care centres and agencies in the province by March 2005.

In Northern Canada, child care administrators face a different set of challenges. The Northwest Territories has 11 official languages – 9 of them Aboriginal. Most communities are not even accessible by road, says Pam Petten, director of Early Childhood and School Services.

Her department supports a college which offers distance education to train ECE teachers. This high-tech system interfaces with efforts to integrate traditional Aboriginal knowledge into early childhood education and care. Petten says the province also supports "language nests" which work closely with local literacy councils to support Aboriginal language learning. One has produced a set of dolls to animate the telling of traditional "dog rib legends."

Salaries are among the highest in the country, "but they are not high compared to the cost of living or wages from other employment," says Petten. "We did a study on wages and working conditions – and we need to find more funding to subsidize the wages."

The NWT is presently reviewing child care regulations, creating a best practices manual, and considering setting in place higher training requirements. At present, there are no training requirements except a first aid certificate.

The Yukon is in a similar situation. ECEC workers need only a 60-hour course. But the government is partnering with the Yukon Child Care Association to review the guidelines. "They are going to open up the regulations, standards will be better, and pay will be higher," says Kismet Lowrie, Director of the Ahia Daycare on the Kwanlun Dunn First Nations reserve.

The quality of child care "is not there yet – that's why I'm here," says Lowrie. Having worked with more highly qualified child care providers in Vancouver at a college-based facility and in Whitehorse, she understands the benefits of higher levels of training. She currently has her whole staff learning the Hanen program, which provides strategies to facilitate language learning and socialization. "It's a program that works for all children, especially children with developmental problems," says Lowrie.

A fact sheet compiled by Child and Family Canada (www.cfc-efc.ca) reports that one in 10 Canadian children has a learning disability, but that only 3% receive special services. CFC's research also shows that almost 50% of adolescent suicides had previously been diagnosed with learning disabilities, and somewhere between 30% and 70% of young offenders and inmates have experienced learning problems.

In an Aboriginal community where social conditions have left youth at high risk for suicide and incarceration, such a program is obviously valuable.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is an important contributor to developmental problems in this community, says Lowrie. She says it's a tricky issue because it's hard to diagnose, it has many different manifestations, and suggested interventions are sometimes contradictory, "but certainly providing support and guidance helps."

Ahia Daycare integrates health services, a family support worker, and an Aboriginal Head Start program which teaches Aboriginal language and culture. It is housed in a beautiful building, specially built for child care, with "a lot of wood and natural lighting." Child care and other services are entirely free to parents, as long as they get their subsidy papers in order.

Down the coast in Vancouver, the child care centre at Simon Fraser University (SFU) is housed in similarly scenic surroundings, but faces different problems.

The centre's commitment to quality is clear. All staff are qualified early childhood educators, with specialization in the age group with which they work. Separate programs accommodate

children aged 3-18 months, 1-3 years, and 3-5 years. "We are always looking for ways we can improve," says new Executive Director Pat Frouws.

Frouws belongs to a network of child care providers who work with the Emilia Reggio approach, modelled after Reggio, a city in Italy. With this "child directed" curriculum, teachers follow the children's interests, encouraging problem-solving and cognitive development.

These innovative approaches take place in an ideal environment. The children can go into the university labs, or the art and anthropology galleries. They have access to a swimming pool, hiking trails, and outdoor playgrounds in a mountain setting.

The challenge is to deliver this high-quality program at a reasonable price. None of its highly qualified staff left when they were handed a $2 per hour pay cut a few years ago, says Frouws, but many parents had to forego using the centre's after-school child care when provincial subsidies were withdrawn.

From East to West, the story is the same: child care and education programs are surviving – and even thriving – because of the dedication of those who run the programs, work in them, or support them. Drawing on a scattering of provincial, municipal, and federal funds, child care is reaching out to meet a variety of different needs. The ground has been laid, many fascinating species have cropped up, and now what they all need is a little watering to continue to grow and flourish.

Janet Creery is Communications Officer at the CCSD.

Thank you . . .

...to all the people who submitted entries to the CCSD's Photography Contest. We received a wonderful array of photographs showing beautiful children across Canada participating in all kinds of interesting and engrossing activities. The photos aptly illustrate the importance of high-quality early education and care for our children, as well as the diversity of approaches that can be used to keep them encouraged, engaged and stimulated.

Some of the entries appear throughout this issue of *Perception*, and others will be used in a photo gallery display at the national Child Care for a Change! conference.

It was very difficult to chose from among the great entries we received. In the end, first prize was awarded to Tracey Freill; her winning entry appears on this cover of *Perception*. Second prize was awarded to John Bonnar (see page 19), and Brigitte Insull's photograph was awarded third prize (see page 15).

Thanks to everyone who sent us their favourite photographs of children. They were a joy to receive. And keep up your good work on behalf of Canada's children.

Nancy Colborne Perkins
CCSD Senior Communications Advisor

Thank you . . .

Call for Nominations

THE AWARD

The Weiler Award is presented annually to acknowledge and honour exceptional contributions to community and social development in Canada.

The Award recognises outstanding dedication by individuals, groups or organizations to social development/social justice causes through co-operative linkages and collaboration among individuals, groups, agencies and organizations.

The individual, group or organization honoured by this award is involved in social development as a catalyst for co-operation, social inclusiveness and creative response to social needs in both occupational and volunteer endeavours.

DICK WEILER (1942-1995)

Dick was a social advocate and humanitarian who devoted his life to making the world a better place. He helped lay the groundwork for social policies to promote national and community values in Canada.

NOMINATING A CANDIDATE

Complete a nomination by:

- providing a description in 300 words or less of the candidate's achievements, the nature and impact of the activities involved and the audiences reached;
- preparing a one-page biography of the person or a short profile of the organization or group; and
- by obtaining three letters of support.

The nomination documents should be forwarded by March 15, 2005 to:

Weiler Award Trust
Attention: Ms. Gweneth Gowanlock
1001 – 44 Emmerson Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 2L8
Tel: 613-728-1442
E-mail: Tweetzero@aol.com

2005 AWARD

The recipient of the 2005 Weiler Award will be honoured at an awards luncheon at the Twelfth Biennial Conference on Canadian Social Welfare Policy, to be held during the period June 15-18, 2005 in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

"It is not someone else's responsibility to tackle our social problems and injustices. It is up to us. We will have to learn how to develop meaningful partnerships, because if we work together, support each other, and don't quit, we can make a difference."

Dick Weiler, June 1995

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